

“fixed bayonets.” Their visits used to be repeated at intervals of every fifteen or twenty minutes. The drake never went into the hole; and I am therefore inclined to believe that he does not lend his aid in the performance of the duties of incubation.

The greatest number of eggs laid by the Goslet, of which I have a record, is twelve. This nest was taken by Mr. Spry at Budaon in August last. The hole occupied was at no great height; but it was  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet deep, and only large enough to admit of ingress and egress; the contents had to be removed by means of an iron spoon something like a soup-ladle with an extra-long handle.

The eggs are obtusely pointed ovals, and certainly large for the size of the bird; they measure  $1.7 \times 1.3$  inch, and in shape and colour are exactly similar to those of the Whistling Teal.

*April 1875 199*

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XXVII.—*Fifth Appendix to a List of Birds observed in Malta and Gozo*\*. By CHARLES A. WRIGHT, C.M.Z.S.

269. *SAXICOLA LEUCOPYGA*, Brehm; vel *Saxicola leucocephala*, Brehm.

At length I am able to add an entirely new bird to the avifauna of Europe. I allude to *Saxicola leucopyga*, which, before the advent of the specimen now under notice, had not been observed on the European continent or any of its adjacent islands. It was shot on the 18th of April, 1872, by Signor Vitali, a public weigher of Her Majesty's Customs, on some rocky ground, called *Tal capucini*, on the south side of the Grand Harbour, in the Cotonnera district. It was set up by Signor Francesco Ellul, and came into my hands immediately afterwards. The head, nape, and rump are pure white; the tail white, slightly marked with brown towards the extremities of the feathers, except the two central feathers, which are dark brown. The rest of the plumage is silky black or very dark brown. There is no doubt now, I believe, of the identity of this bird with *Saxicola leucopyga*.

\* For Fourth Appendix see *Ibis*, 1870, p. 488, *et seq.*

I have specimens from Upper Egypt, both with and without the white head, and two very interesting examples—one having the head pure white, with one or two black feathers on the white ground, and the other having the head black intermixed with a few straggling white feathers—confirming the conclusion already arrived at, that *S. leucocephala* and *S. leucopyga* are one and the same species.

270. *SAXICOLA MELANOLEUCA* (Güld.). Black-throated Chat.

A specimen of Wheatear sent by me, some time ago, to Mr. Dresser, has been determined by that author to be *Saxicola melanoleuca*, an eastern form of the Russet Chat, as mentioned in his 'History of the Birds of Europe.' Other specimens, shot by me, are in my collection. One, a fine adult male, an exact counterpart of the plate, was shot on the 9th April, when several others were seen. The description, made at the time, was:—length  $5\frac{7}{8}$  inches (15 cm.); beak and legs black; first primary shorter than the third; base of middle tail-feathers white. I shot a female in the same field shortly afterwards. The dimensions are precisely the same as the male. The top of the head and back are brown, very slightly tinged with isabelline; wings darker; extremity of tail-feathers and two thirds of central ones blackish brown. The patch on the throat and sides of the head is of the same shape and extent as in the male, but rendered indistinct by the feathers being tipped with grey, giving it a sooty look; breast rufescent cream-colour, which extends, more or less mixed with white, to the under tail-coverts; upper tail-coverts and basal ends of tail-feathers pure white; faint indications of a light superciliary streak; beak and legs brown. Another female, shot on the 18th of the same month and year, had the head and back much more isabelline, reminding one of the Desert Chat (*S. isabellina*). A male obtained on the 24th April, 1868, appears to be still in immature plumage, having some resemblance to the female, but possessing the jet-black throat and auriculars, this colour reaching very low down the gular region and slightly above the eye. Another male, shot

at the Salini on the 30th March, 1871, has the white parts beautifully tinged with rufous cream-colour. Two others, sex unfortunately not noted, one of which was taken in Sept. 1861, are in the brown plumage. One of these, probably a young male in autumn, has the black patch fully developed. My not having hitherto included *Saxicola melanoleuca* in the Malta list arose from considering it undistinguishable from *S. stapazina*, Linn., from which it appear schiefly to differ in the extent of black on the throat, and in having a more eastern range.

271. CALANDRELLA MINOR (Dresser, Birds of Europe, pt. xxi. Sept. 1873). Lesser Short-toed Lark.

*Calandritis minor*, Cab. Mus. Hein. i. p. 123, "N.E. Africa."

This is another new bird for the European list; and for a knowledge of its occurrence we are indebted to the author of the 'Birds of Europe,' who certainly deserves all the credit of having detected it among some skins of *C. brachydactyla* (Ibis, 1864, p. 60) sent to him by me from Malta. The desert Larks approach so closely to one another that it is quite impossible without a good series to differentiate them. The specimen which entitles this bird to a place in the avifauna of Europe was obtained by me in Malta in November, 1862. Mr. Dresser, in the great work above quoted, says that this species closely resembles *Calandrella pispoletta*, Pallas's Short-toed Lark (which, in its turn, had also been confounded by authors with *C. brachydactyla*), but differs from it in being smaller and much more rufous and less grey in colour. This "elegant little bird, the smallest of the group," is found in Northern Africa, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and Nubia. Its habits are said to be similar to those of the Common Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*).

272. EMBERIZA PUSILLA, Pallas. Little Bunting.

It is with much pleasure that I announce, for the first time, the presence of this pretty little bird in Malta. A specimen was brought to me alive by a bird-catcher on the 24th of October 1873, and continued to live till the 1st of November, when it was found dead in its cage. It was taken in a net a



few days previously, and was so tame as readily to pick up seed and sip water in the presence of persons looking at it, but was easily startled and frightened if approached too suddenly. Its note was a single sharp *tseet*, uttered once, or repeated two or three times at short intervals. On dissection it proved to be a male, probably a young bird, and very thin, although its crop was nearly full of hemp-seed; but this kind of food probably did not agree with it. In plumage it resembles exactly the upper figure in Bree's 'Birds of Europe,' who also gives a very accurate description. Like the plumage attributed to the female, it has no russet on the throat, and presents a cream-coloured streak extending backwards from the eye. Its bright russet cheeks and ear-coverts, together with an irregular black band running over each side of the head, above the eye, from the base of the beak to the nape, and its diminutive size will help to distinguish it at a glance. The beak is straight, or nearly so, very sharp, and pointed, and slightly reversed at the tip. Upper mandible small. Irides black, or extremely dark brown; legs and feet light yellowish brown. Carefully measured in the flesh, its length was slightly over 5 inches, from carpal to end of wing  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches.

273. *CYPSELUS PALLIDUS*, Shelley. Egyptian Swift.

Undoubted examples of this Swift have been taken in Malta in May of the present year. Capt. Feilden procured one in the market on the 18th; and I obtained another at Salini on the 27th. Both specimens were females and in good condition. In mine the ovary was beginning to enlarge. He observed a bird on the 13th, which must have belonged to this species, in company with common Swifts; and, on the wing, it reminded him of a large Sand-Martin. I am nearly certain that I have shot this light-coloured Swift before; and one occasion especially recurs to my memory. This was in August, when I killed several out of a large flock on Fort-Manoel Island. Unfortunately I did not preserve any, mistaking them for the young of *C. apus*. Little doubt now remains on my mind that *Cypselus pallidus* visits us, both in spring and autumn, and is probably a regular migrant to



and from Southern Europe. Considering it is common in Egypt, and has been obtained in Tangiers by Major Irby (Ibis, 1870, p. 445, and Shelley's 'Birds of Egypt,' 1872, p. 172), it would be rather curious if we did not find it here; and a further search may possibly demonstrate the fact of its breeding in this island. I shot several examples of *Cypselus apus* for comparison; and the subject of the present notice may be easily distinguished from the common species by its light colour, smaller dimensions, and greater extent of white on the throat.

#### 274. PHENICOPTERUS ERYTHRÆUS (Verreaux) ?

Besides the well-known large kind of European Flamingo (Ibis, 1864, p. 149, 1870, p. 492), long since recorded as an accidental visitor, I have to include in the Malta list a small species or variety, probably the same as that found by Salvadori in the island of Sardinia\*, and of which there are also one or two specimens in the museum at Palermo, taken, I believe, in Sicily. About this bird there appears to be some difference of opinion. Without a series of specimens for comparison, I will not increase the confusion by offering an opinion, further than observing that the great difference in size would, *primâ facie*, induce one to declare that they are perfectly distinct. However this may be, I may at once state that the small individual which forms the subject of the present notice was shot on the 27th or 28th of March, 1869, at Marsa Scala, on the east coast of the island, by Capt. Azopardi, during a strong north-westerly gale, and that I am indebted for becoming possessed of it to the liberality of Mr. Jemison Smith, of this island. There were no others with it when killed.

The following comparative dimensions are from a specimen in my possession of *Phœnicopterus roseus*, shot by myself at Tunis, and the small example shot in Malta, as stated above:—

\* 'Catalogo degli Uccelli di Sardegna, con note e osservazioni di Tommaso Salvadori,' &c. &c., p. 102: Milano, 1864. Also 'Fauna D'Italia,' parte seconda, "Uccelli," by the same author, p. 250: Milano, 1872.

|                                            | <i>Ph. roseus.</i> |                  | <i>Ph. erythræus.</i> |                 |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
|                                            | ft.                | in.              | ft.                   | in.             |
| Total length .....                         | 4                  | 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ | 3                     | 6               |
| Legs .....                                 | 2                  | 1                | 1                     | 3               |
| Tarsus .....                               | 1                  | 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  | 0                     | 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| Wing .....                                 | 1                  | 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  | 1                     | 2               |
| Beak, tip to margin of frontal feathers .. | 0                  | 6                | 0                     | 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ |

The plumage of the smaller bird is more generally diffused with pink, and the red on the wing-coverts is more extended and brighter. The tail-feathers are white, with a slight tinge of pink. The form of the beak is precisely the same as in *Ph. roseus*, only proportionately smaller.

#### 275. *LARUS LEUCOPHÆUS* (Lichst.).

This bird appears to be the common representative of *Larus argentatus* in the Mediterranean, from which it chiefly differs in its darker mantle and ochreous-coloured legs; in *L. argentatus* the legs are livid white. I had often remarked this difference; but it was not until my attention was drawn to the fact of the existence of *Larus leucophæus* in the Mediterranean by my friend Mr. Howard Saunders, who has devoted much attention to the Laridæ, that I became aware of it being the common so-called "Herring-Gull" of Malta. I have since shot several specimens, besides having seen numerous examples flying about the harbours, close enough to note the colour of the legs; and all have proved to be *Larus leucophæus*.

The presence here, therefore, of its near ally, *Larus argentatus*, requires confirmation; and my observations under this head (Ibis, 1864, p. 151) should be applied to *Larus leucophæus*; for it is very unlikely we should have *L. argentatus* here in the breeding-season, though it is not impossible both species may occur in the winter. Subjoined are the dimensions, taken in the flesh, of two birds shot at the mouth of the Grand Harbour on the 21st of February, 1871,—the first being an undoubted *L. leucophæus*, the second probably the same species in immature plumage. Both specimens were preserved.

*Adult* ♀. Length 1 ft. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.; carpus to tip 1 ft. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.; tarsus 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.; beak to angle of gape 3 in.; middle toe same

length as tarsus ; wings extend beyond the tail 2 in. Colour of mantle darker than in *L. argentatus* ; margin of eyelids red ; irides light amber. Legs and feet chrome-yellow ; inside of mouth mixture of red and yellow.

*Immature bird*, ♀. Length 1 ft. 11½ in. ; carpus to tip 1 ft. 5½ in. ; beak to angle of gape 3 in. ; tarsus upwards of 2½ in. ; middle toe rather more than 2½ in. ; wings extend beyond the tail 2 in. Back brown mixed with bluish grey ; rest of plumage mottled with brown ; broad band of brown at end of tail. Beak black, with white horny tip ; legs livid white.

276. *ANAS CLANGULA*. Golden-eye.

In my collection there is a specimen, ♀, obtained in December 1870, which had escaped notice until Lord Lilford, going over a drawer of skins with me, drew my attention to it. This is the first record of its capture in Malta, although doubtless, it being common in Sicily, it occasionally visits us on migration.

277. *ANAS ANGUSTIROSTRIS* (Ménétr.). Marbled Duck.

A specimen of this rare European Duck was observed in the market by Capt. Feilden and myself on the 11th May this year (1874) ; and it is possible we are indebted for its visit to the very boisterous and unseasonable weather that has lately prevailed. From all accounts it appears that this southern species is a summer migrant from Africa to Europe ; and as it has been met with in Sicily and Epirus, it is somewhat singular that it does not oftener put in an appearance at Malta. This specimen proved on dissection to be a female, with the ovary enlarging, stomach empty. It is now in the collection of Capt. Feilden.

We afterwards traced out the person who shot it—a country lad named Birtu Samut—and learnt from him the following particulars :—

It was first noticed on Saturday, 9th inst., at mid-day, at the Salini, and an ineffectual attempt made to shoot it. It returned in the evening, when Samut winged it ; but it succeeded in escaping for a time by swimming out to sea, notwithstanding having also received a severe contusion in the



head with a stone. On the following day, at about noon, he saw it swim ashore, in the same part of the Salini, so exhausted as to allow itself to be taken by the hand. The wind had been blowing strong from the westward. The species was quite new to the shooters at the Salini; nor had the market-man seen any of the kind before.

278. *ALCA TORDA*.

I have lately had an opportunity of examining the specimen, taken many years ago, which gave rise to the admittance of the species *Uria troile* into the Malta list. It turns out to be a young Razor-bill, *Alca torda*, which name should be substituted for the erroneous one (Ibis, 1864, p. 152). I may add that *Alca torda* has been occasionally observed in Sardinia (*Salvadori*\*) and Sicily (*Doderlein*†).

The following are some additional notes regarding rare and occasional visitors:—

*AQUILA CHRYSÆTUS*. On Sunday, 16th Nov. (1873), Dr. Gulia drove up to my house at Sliema to say that a very large Eagle had been shot two or three days ago, that he had closely examined it and determined it to be a Golden Eagle. He also told me that the person into whose hands it had fallen intended to have it preserved. I lost no time in making further inquiries, and on the following morning crossed over the two harbours to Cospicua, with the view of obtaining permission to examine the specimen, and, if possible, securing it. Judge of my disappointment and, I must add, disgust on ascertaining that the owner had, on the Saturday morning previous, consigned it to a passing scavenger; and all my efforts, which were not a few, to trace its remains were unavailing. From some hasty notes taken by Dr. Gulia when the bird was left with him for a short time, no doubt exists in my mind that he was right in his diagnosis; but it is a thousand pities that so grand a bird should have been thus miserably lost, the more so as the species has only once before

\* *Op. cit.* ('Uccelli di Sardegna'), p. 134.

† 'Avifauna del Modenese e della Sicilia,' per Pietro Doderlein, &c. &c., p. 276: Palermo, 1873.

been recorded as observed here (Ibis, 1869, p. 245), and no collection in the island, public or private, contains a specimen. It was shot on the rocks near the ruins of Crendi, on Thursday, the 13th inst. It was seen to approach from the direction of Filfla, at a great height, and, on gaining the land, descend at one flight to the ground. From the description given it appears to have been in the dark plumage of the immature bird, known in that state as the Ring-tailed Eagle, on account of the white marking on the tail-feathers.

FALCO ELEONORÆ (Ibis, 1864, p. 48). The first specimen of this interesting bird that I ever handled in the flesh was taken alive in Malta on the 4th May, 1864, and is in my collection. It is an exceedingly fine example of the bird in the Hobby stage of plumage. I append a description, chiefly from notes taken at the time :—

Length (in the flesh) 15 inches; wings from carpal to tip  $12\frac{1}{4}$ ; wings extending beyond the tail  $1\frac{7}{2}$ . Beak bluish. Cere, margins of eyelids, legs, and feet sulphureous yellow; claws black. Irides very dark.

The upper parts are of a schistaceous black, very slightly marked on the edges of some of the feathers with rufous; no rufous on the nape. Underparts rufous, indistinctly streaked with blackish brown tinged with sooty black; deeper rufous towards the vent- and thigh-feathers, which show very few streaks. Moustaches very apparent; sides of the neck and throat white or creamy white. *Inner webs of the primaries unicolorous*, i. e. without any spots, which peculiarity, together with its larger size, is given by Salvadori\*, although hesitatingly, as the chief means of distinguishing it from the Hobby in this condition of plumage.

The bird-stuffer to whom I sent it to be set up assures me it was a male. Lord Lilford, who has given much attention to this species, thinks it is probably in the plumage of the third year.

I once observed what I am almost certain was a bird of this species, in summer, flying in the ditch of the fortifi-

\* *Op. cit.* ('Uccelli di Sardegna'), p. 25.

cations of the land front of Valletta; and it is far from improbable that it occasionally breeds here. There is no doubt of the true Peregrine nesting on the precipitous cliffs of these islands. Schembri's statement of the Kite (*Milvus regalis*) nesting in Gozo is certainly erroneous, this species invariably selecting trees for nidification.

PANDION HALIAETUS (Ibis, 1864, p. 45). There was an Osprey, ♂, in the market on the 1st Sept., 1871, which had been shot in Gozo. On the 23rd May, this year, I observed an Osprey at the Salini, close enough to see that it had a large fish in its talons. The men on the salt-works told me that it had been there since the morning, fishing in an arm of the sea that borders one side of the salt-pans, occasionally alighting to feast on its prey. It had, no doubt, been attracted by the mullet which abound there at this season. They said that it paid little attention to the labourers, and several times came so near that they could have easily shot it if they had had a gun. Up to the 27th it continued to be seen about the locality.

MILVUS NIGER (Ibis, 1864, p. 46; 1870, p. 489). I obtained another of these birds, ♀, in the market on the 10th Sept., 1872, and preserved the skin.

YUNX TORQUILLA (Ibis, 1864, p. 50). As mentioned, a rare winter visitant. Capt. Feilden obtained a specimen in the market on the 30th Dec., 1873.

CUCULUS GLANDARIUS (Ibis, 1864, p. 50). On looking over my birds the other day, I found I had one of these Cuckoos, which had been obtained in the market on the 18th April, 1867. It was a female. This makes the fourth that I have known to have been taken here in the course of a great many years.

PARUS MAJOR (Ibis, 1869, p. 245). A second example of this species was taken in Malta on the 8th Oct., 1871. A bird-catcher noticed it on a tree in his garden at the Pietà, and, laying a net for it, succeeded in effecting its capture.



It lived for several days. I was fortunate enough in securing the specimen.

EMBERIZA SCHÆNICLUS, ♀ (Ibis, 1864, p. 55). One was taken in a net on the 9th Dec., 1871.

EMBERIZA NIVALIS (Ibis, 1864, p. 55; 1870, p. 490). Two other specimens of this northern bird have been taken within a few days of each other, since the one shot by me in November 1869. They were killed about the end of December of the same year, or beginning of January 1870. Both specimens were shown to me; and I secured one of them for my collection.

HIRUNDO DAURICA, Linn., (Ibis, 1864, p. 57). Another example of this rare visitor was taken in April 1870.

HIRUNDO RUPESTRIS (Ibis, 1864, pp. 57, 291; 1865, p. 464). I noticed several of these birds again at Rabuto, Gozo, on two successive days at Christmas, 1873. They seemed to be quite at home, hawking for insects on the sheltered sides of the houses in the most frequented part of the town, and from time to time resting on the cornices of the Calypso Hotel, where we were lodging, and other buildings. No other species of Swallow, as far as I know, passes the winter in these islands. On revisiting Gozo in the following April, I could find no traces of it, although the usual Swallows, Martins, and Swifts were to be seen everywhere on migration.

CAPRIMULGUS EUROPÆUS (Ibis, 1864, p. 58). I have a curious variety of this species, labelled "Female, Gargur, Malta, April 3, 1868." It is of a general silvery grey, wing-coverts almost pure white, the markings shown in the ordinary-coloured bird being faintly traceable on the light ground. It was given to me in the flesh by the person in charge of the government aqueducts. The latest date of the occurrence of *C. europæus* in Malta, during the spring migration, that has come to my notice, was on the 9th June, 1870, when I was surprised to find one of these birds and a Stilt Plover (Ibis, 1864, p. 49) on a stall in the market.

LANIUS MINOR (Ibis, 1864, p. 59; 1870, p. 492). I noticed one of these rare visitors in the market on the 5th Sept., 1871; and on the 8th I saw another on one of the stalls.

ALAUDA CALANDRA (Ibis, 1864, p. 61). On the 26th April, 1870, a sportsman shot one of these birds. I saw one on Fort-Manoel Island on the 8th May, 1874. This species of Lark appears to be getting rare here.

ANTHUS PRATENSIS (Ibis, 1864, p. 61). There is in my collection a specimen of this species of a general isabelline colour, with the wing-feathers almost pure white; the feathers of the tail are darker. Beak and legs very light yellowish brown.

ANTHUS SPINOLETTA. A piece of good luck befell Capt. Feilden in shooting one of these Pipits, on the first occasion when he and I paid a visit to Fort-Manoel Island, one fine sunny afternoon in November of 1873, the wind having blown for three days from the north-west. He very generously gave it to me; and it, being little injured by the shot, made a capital specimen. Length in the flesh 6 inches or 15 centimetres, quite  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch longer than a specimen of *Anthus pratensis* killed shortly afterwards for comparison; tarsus  $\frac{7}{8}$  in., *A. pratensis* being  $\frac{6}{8}$ . Colour of legs hair-brown (in *pratensis* they are light yellowish brown); irides brown. External tail-feather, distal half obliquely marked with white. In the specimen of *A. pratensis* now before me the end of second tail-feather, besides the first, is distinctly marked with white. General colour of the upper parts smoky olivaceous brown, the centre of each feather being darker. Greater and lesser wing-coverts margined with greyish white; superciliary streak, throat, and abdomen dirty white. Breast and sides thickly marked with dull indistinct spots, running into one another, especially about the sides of the neck. Very fat. Contents of stomach elytra of beetles.

TURDUS TORQUATUS (Ibis, 1864, p. 63). Several of the rarer species of Thrushes have made their appearance at Malta last winter (1873-74), possibly impelled by the severe weather. Capt. Feilden obtained a Ringed Ousel in the market on the

4th Nov., and another on the 8th of the same month. A few others were also taken.

*TURDUS VISCIVORUS* (Ibis, 1864, p. 63). In the last week of October 1873, one of these Thrushes was brought to the market, and Capt. Feilden obtained specimens at the game-stalls on the 18th and 27th Nov.

*TURDUS PILARIS* (Ibis, 1864, p. 64). This Thrush has visited us earlier and in greater numbers than usual this winter (1873). Capt. Feilden first observed it in the market on the 21st Nov. He afterwards saw it on the following dates:—25th Nov. (one specimen) ; 28th ditto (four specimens) ; 11th Dec. (one specimen) ; 20th Dec. (two specimens).

*TURDUS ILIACUS* (Ibis, 1864, p. 64). Two specimens were seen by the above-mentioned gentleman in the market on the 17th and 30th Dec., 1873.

*ACCENTOR MODULARIS* (Ibis, 1864, p. 67). Obtained a specimen in the market on the 8th Feb., 1870. Another example was shot on the 17th Dec., 1873, by Capt. Feilden when out shooting with me at the Inquisitor's Palace. A third was obtained by him in the market on the 28th Dec., 1873.

*SYLVIA MELANOCEPHALA* (Ibis, 1864, p. 69). From its well-known habits in other parts of the Mediterranean, there is no doubt this bird would regularly breed here if left undisturbed, as it is generally to be met with in pairs as the breeding-season approaches. Winter, however, is the season when it is oftenest seen. From the appearance of a female obtained this year as late as the 7th May, I have little doubt she had a nest. On the 9th Capt. Feilden shot a fine male, and we saw or heard two or three others. I noticed it this year as late as the middle of May. I only once heard it sing while hovering in the air like *S. conspicillata*. Its song is rather singular, flute-like, and melodious, but not very prolonged. This was in April. Its call and alarm notes are familiar to most people who have gardens and take notice of their feathered visitors.



1861  
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AÆDON GALACTODES, *Aëdon rubiginosa* (Ibis, 1864, p. 72).  
A Rufous Warbler (the intermediate appellation of "Sedge" having been very properly suppressed since its habits have become better known) was taken alive on the 23rd May, 1873. It soon became accustomed to its prison-house and familiar with those who gave it food. It is a very lively bird, constantly on the move, frequently raising and dropping its tail, which it spreads out like a lady's fan.

HYPOLAIS ICTERINA (Vieill.), *Motacilla hypolais* (Linn.), (Ibis, 1864, p. 71). This bird, about which there has been so much confusion amongst authors, is, as I have stated in the first part of this list, not uncommon in the vernal and autumnal migrations; but good specimens are rather difficult to get.

The following is a description, confirming my previous observations, of a specimen, ♀, obtained on the 9th May this year (1874), amongst some carob trees, on an eminence overlooking the upper end of the valley of St. Julian's:—

Length  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches (140 millimetres); wing  $3\frac{1}{4}$  in. (80 mm.); tarsus  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (22 mm.); beak  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (13 mm.).

First, or bastard wing-feather very short, scarcely reaching beyond the extremity of the upper primary coverts; second primary (reckoning the bastard feather as the first) longer than the fifth, and about equal to the fourth; third longest in the wing, which in repose extends to fully half the length of the tail. Upper parts green tinged with ash; wings and tail brown edged with grey, the tertiaries being most broadly marked; superciliary streak, throat, cheeks, and underparts light yellow; tail somewhat rounded when spread, but emarginated when closed. Upper mandible brown; lower mandible tinged with orange. Interior of mouth orange. Tarsus, toes, and claws slaty brown. Irides hazel. Ovary beginning to develop. Condition of bird rather fat.

In the third edition of Yarrell, *H. polyglotta* is given as having been captured in England; but from Prof. Newton's edition of the same work, now in course of publication, it would appear that the bird alluded to was really *Hypolais icterina* of Vieillot.

ACROCEPHALUS TURDOIDES (*Calamoherpe turdoïdes*, Ibis, 1864, p. 72). Two of these birds were taken alive, Oct. 1873, and became very tame in confinement, eating readily from the hand, and going in and out of their cage, in the open air, without any fear. Mr. F. Mamo, of this island, who is very successful in his treatment of soft-billed birds as cage-favourites, kept them for some time. None of the pictures I have seen gives a correct idea of this bird's appearance in life. Its most natural position is crouching, the neck very thick and short, with its large head slightly raised and drawn in close to the shoulders, which are round and broad.

MEROPS PERSICUS (Ibis, 1864, p. 73). One of these rare and adventitious wanderers to Europe was shot in Malta since the publication of my "Fourth Appendix." It was killed at the end of May 1871, at the Inquisitor's Palace, by F. Camilleri, barber of the Central Hospital, out of a flock; but whether of the same or of the common kind (*M. apiaster*) he could not say. He was first attracted by its note, which was different from any he had heard before. The specimen is in my collection. It is a male in spring plumage. It is the only Malta-killed specimen extant, as all trace is lost of the only other example I know of, said by Schembri to have been killed in Sept. 1840.

ALCEDO ISPIDA (Ibis, 1864, p. 73). This bird was unusually abundant in the autumn of 1873. Its Maltese name, *Ghasfur la San Martin*, is derived from the time of year it generally makes its appearance, namely, the Feast of St. Martin. One bird-stuffer preserved about twenty specimens. I noticed it on the 30th Oct. and 3rd Nov., 1873, and 7th Jan., 1874—on the second of these occasions in the Dockyard Creek, right in amongst the boats and shipping.

TRINGA MINUTA (Ibis, 1864, p. 492). I shot several examples on the 27th May, this year; but although they had almost assumed complete summer plumage, dissection did not show any signs of approach to the breeding-state. The stomach of one of them contained small marine shells of the species *Truncatella truncatula*.

✓ *TRINGA TEMMINCKII* (Ibis, 1864, p. 148; 1869, p. 492). This bird is doubtless a regular migrant; and scarcely a spring passes without my observing it. It also occurs in autumn. The last time I shot one was on the 5th May, this year, at Salini, out of a small flock, which had become extremely wild on account of being frequently fired at and molested.

✓ *STREPSILAS INTERPRES* (Ibis, 1864, p. 148; 1865, p. 466). One of these birds, which cannot be considered more than an occasional visitor, was shot in Gozo on the 15th May, this year, and kindly sent to me by Mr. Arrowsmith. It had almost attained the full summer plumage, and was of the female sex.

✓ *PHŒNICOPTERUS ROSEUS*? (Ibis, 1864, p. 148; 1870, p. 492). A Flamingo was seen and shot at on the 22nd August, 1870, at the Salini; and footmarks, probably of the same bird, were afterwards observed in the mud in the outer ditch of the Marsa. A Flamingo was seen flying over the suburb of Floriana one day in April this year, 1874.

✓ *LARUS TRIDACTYLUS* (Ibis, 1864, p. 151). My friend Mr. Medlycott shot one of these birds in the Marsamuscetto Harbour on the 22nd Feb., 1873; and I examined the specimen before he sent it to be skinned. It is one of our rarest Gulls, but, I dare say, gets often overlooked in a flock of the Adriatic Gull, one of which he killed with the other barrel.

✓ *LARUS CANUS* (Ibis, 1864, p. 151). I have a specimen of this Gull, which was taken on the 18th Dec., 1865.

✓ *STERNA HYBRIDA* (Ibis, 1864, p. 153). I shot a beautiful specimen of this Tern at the Salini on the 22nd May, of the present year. It was a male, and assuming the breeding-state. The breast and belly were prettily mottled with white, the lead-colour becoming nearly black towards the vent. Legs orange-red; beak brownish red.

✓ *STERNA FISSIPES* (Ibis, 1864, p. 153). In July 1870 a large number of Black Terns visited our harbours, and remained here till about the end of September. I first noticed them



on the 29th July, while paying a visit to the ironclad squadron, which was anchored off the mouth of the Grand Harbour. I shot one on the 4th August in Sliema Creek. It was standing on a fishing-cork, and had been seen in this position for several hours, regardless of the ferry-boats which repeatedly passed close to it in the course of the day. As they chiefly confined themselves to the other harbours, on the 6th I organized a regular campaign against them, and found them in abundance fishing in the New-Harbour extension, which was at that time pretty free from shipping. I saw none in the black plumage of summer; all were more or less marked with grey and white. I shot six, the average measurement being from  $9\frac{1}{2}$  to 10 inches in length—the larger specimens being males, as is always the case with the different species of the Tern family; length of wing  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches. It was exceedingly interesting to watch their light and rapid movements; now dropping suddenly from their airy altitude, splashing the water like a falling stone, in pursuit of some small fish or offal that had attracted their attention, now coursing through the air, in imitation, as it were, of the Swallow tribe. In many parts of the new harbour were placed floating corks to mark certain spots where mines had been laid to blast the rock at the bottom, in order to deepen the anchorage. On most of these corks was to be seen a solitary Tern, quietly watching for some passing fish, to seize it for its prey. They showed no fear of approaching boats. I amused myself for some time with one little fellow, by pulling my skiff to windward and allowing it to drift down towards him. He never moved until I had almost touched him with my hand, and then only to mount a few feet in the air over my head, and alight on the same cork the instant that I had passed. This experiment I repeated several times, with the same result. Occasionally, while within a few inches of him, he would exchange calls with a passing companion. The note was rather a shrill scream. So close did he allow of my approach that I could watch the expression of his little dark bright eye; but there was nothing of alarm in it. May be, one reason for his loathness to abandon this particular cork

was the presence of a small fish, which he had captured and laid at his feet, and his not wishing to renounce so good a chance of a meal. Taking up the fish to examine, and carefully replacing it, I had no sooner done so, than my little friend immediately resumed his stand on the cork. So much fearlessness and confidence were enough to touch even a collector's heart, and nothing could have induced me to repay them by injury. Indeed I shot no more specimens that day. The best way to distinguish the Black Tern from the White-winged Black Tern (*Sterna leucoptera*), in all states of plumage, is by comparing the length of the tarsi, there being a considerable and constant difference, that of the Black Tern being shorter.

PUFFINUS CINEREUS and PUFFINUS ANGLORUM (Ibis, 1864, p. 153). Although examples of these birds may be seen nearly throughout the year, it is in March that they approach the shores of these islands for the purpose of breeding, old and young taking their departure in October.

PELECANUS ONOCROTALUS (Ibis, 1864, p. 154; 1865, p. 466). There was a Pelecan in immature plumage exhibited for sale in the market on the 27th, 1872, which I ascertained had been shot in Gozo.

FULIGULA CRISTATA (Ibis, 1864, p. 156). One of these rare Ducks, a fine male, was noticed in the market on the 19th Nov., 1873, by Capt. Feilden. The winter of 1873-74 has been remarkable for the large number of Woodcock, Duck, and Teal that have been taken here during the time of migration.

N.B. *Stercorarius catarrhactes* and *Cygnus ferus* require further confirmation before being accepted as accidental visitors. The statement of the appearance of *S. catarrhactes* (Ibis, 1864, p. 151) was based on a very dilapidated specimen; and I have reason to fear that I was mistaken in referring it to that species. The head, wing-bones, and feet are still in my possession; so that it may yet be determined by comparison with other specimens. It was shot as long ago as

1849, on the day of the "Feast of the Conception," at the Salini, by Mr. Ardouino, who still remembers the occurrence\*. The specimen of *Cygnus* alluded to (Ibis, 1864, p. 155) was doubtless the young of *C. olor*, a species already registered as visiting Malta (Ibis, 1869, p. 248). It is more than probable that *C. ferus* has also occurred here; but I have no authentic information of the fact. There is an example of *C. olor* in the Malta University Museum nearly pure white, but with scarcely any appearance of the frontal knob. I think the occurrence of *Alauda cristata* (Ibis, 1864, p. 60; 1865, p. 464), even as an accidental visitor, is very doubtful, also *Podiceps cornutus* (Ibis, 1864, p. 157), as I have never myself seen a specimen of either. Whilst on the subject of corrections, I may state that the alleged specimens of the American Gull (*Larus atricilla*) taken in Sicily, and preserved in the Palermo University Museum (Ibis, 1869, p. 255), do not belong to that species. During a recent visit to Palermo I had an opportunity, through the kindness of the learned professor in charge of the zoological department, of examining them. They are unmistakably examples of the Adriatic (or, as it is better called, the Mediterranean) Black-headed Gull. It may be taken for granted that the American species does not occur in the Mediterranean; and the allusions of authors to it, Yarrell among others, doubtless refer to *Larus melanocephalus*.

# XXVIII.—On rare or little-known Limicolæ.

By J. E. HARTING, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

(Plate IX.)

## The Genus RECURVIROSTRA.

So long ago as 1863, in Wiegmann's 'Archiv' for that year, p. 131, Messrs. Philippi and Landbeck described an Avocet from the Andes, which they named *Recurvirostra andina*, and

\* [Since this paper was sent to the printers Mr. Wright has sent us the fragments mentioned above. On comparing them with specimens in Mr. Dresser's collection, we are able to state that they belong, without doubt, to a young individual of *S. pomatorhinus*.—ED.]